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SUBJECT: Communist Party Wraps up Plenum

1. (SBU) Summary. The Communist Party of Vietnam's Central Committee met January 17-25 to kick off preparations for the 10th Party Congress, to be held in the second quarter of 2006. Among the major issues reportedly discussed were Party membership for capitalists, the participation of Party members in "capitalist economic activities" and amendments to the Party's 1991 Political Platform. Plenum delegates also discussed twenty years of Vietnam's "doi moi" (renewal) policy, with Central Committee members reportedly "greatly optimistic" about developments Vietnam's reform efforts. End Summary.

2. (SBU) The Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) held the 11th Plenum of the 9th Party Congress January 17-25. During a January 28 meeting with Pol/C and Political Assistant, Nguyen Tien Nhien, Director of the CPV External Relations Commission's North America and Western Europe Department, described the recently completed Plenum as "more important than most" because of its focus on key Party documents and reports to be submitted to the 10th Party Congress. Although Nhien could not "say for sure," the Party Congress will likely be held in the second quarter of 2006.

3. (SBU) According to Nhien, the CPV Central Committee members attending the Plenum discussed detailed outlines for the following reports: the CPV's Political Report, a report on theoretical and practical issues regarding Vietnam's "doi moi" (renewal) process over the past 20 years, a report on several articles of the CPV Political Platform (adopted in 1991 during the 7th Party Congress), a report on possible amendments to current CPV statutes, a report on Party-building tasks, a plan for the nation's socio-economic developments for the period of 2006-2010 and a report on the Politburo's and the Party Secretariat's leadership during the 2001-2006 period. More detailed drafts of these documents will be approved at the 12th Party Plenum, which will reportedly be held no later than June 2005, before being publicized for public comments from Party units and individuals. The final reports will be adopted at the 13th Party Plenum. In short, the Plenum "kicked off the preparations for next year's Party Congress," Nhien said.

4. (SBU) Asked to characterize the tone of Plenum's discussions about the pace and scope of Vietnam's "doi moi" process, Nhien reported that Plenum participants "reached consensus on the key issues" facing the Party and the nation. He added that Central Committee members shared "great optimism" about national developments and the speed and direction of Vietnam's "renewal efforts." "It should come as no surprise that there are different opinions about the current pace of reform," Nhien noted, "but, importantly, the Central Committee reached agreement on several issues in line with the Party's organizational principle of centralized democracy" (which he explained means minority deferment to the majority).

5. (SBU) Nhien claimed that the Party's 1991 Political Platform would be amended to reflect current international and domestic circumstances. Although most of the leading principles outlined in the Platform would remain, amendments are needed to address "dramatic changes" in Vietnam's socio-economic situation, as well as progress in the Party's efforts to improve freedoms and human rights, which Nhien termed as "a big step forward." Other political changes in the world arena also need to be reflected. The Party adopted its Political Platform back in 1991 when the "world socialist system had not yet collapsed," Nhien observed.

6. (SBU) Responding to Pol/C's question, Nhien said that the Central Committee members had discussed and "settled to some extent" the issue of "capitalism and the Party," but this "still needs to be thoroughly discussed by the whole Party and nation" before making major changes to Party policy. Nhien opined that, in the months ahead, the CPV may come up with a final decision on specific wording to be put in Party statutes and related documents concerning the participation of Party members in private economic activities as well as opportunities for private business people to attain Party membership.

7. (SBU) Comment: Current Party regulations explicitly prohibit Party members from "exploiting labor," but the

contradictions between the CPV's proscriptions and Vietnam's economic realities are hard to ignore. We have heard elsewhere that the debate surrounding "capitalist membership" in the Party and Party members' participation in "capitalist economic activities" figured prominently in the Plenum, with the Chinese Communist Party's "Three Represents" the implied model for this possible CPV "reform." Discussions about this change, as well as the debate about how far Vietnam's "doi moi" policy has come - and still needs to go - will figure prominently in intra-Party discussions as it prepares for next year's Congress.
End Comment.

MARINE